

REMARKS

I. Summary of Office Action

Claims 1-9 were examined; claims 1 and 4-7 have been amended herein and claim 2 canceled without prejudice. Consequently, claims 1 and 3-9 are pending in the above-identified patent application.

The Examiner rejected claims 1, 3, and 9 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bruchmann et al. U.S. Patent No. 6,089,831 ("Bruchmann") in view of Beck U.S. Patent No. 6,276,761 ("Beck").

Claims 2 and 4-8 were objected to as depending from a rejected base claim. However, allowable subject matter was indicated.

II. Summary of the Reply

Applicants note with appreciation the indication of allowable subject matter in claims 2 and 4-8. Applicants have amended claims 1 and 4-7 and canceled claim 2 herein in view of this indication of allowable subject matter. The claim amendments are fully supported by the originally-filed application and therefore do not add new matter.

The Examiner's objections and rejections are respectfully traversed.

III. Applicants' Reply to the 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) Rejection

The Examiner rejected claims 1, 3, and 9 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bruchmann in view of Beck. The Examiner's rejection is respectfully traversed.

Applicants have amended base claim 1 to include the subject matter recited in claim 2, (now canceled) which was indicated as allowable by the Examiner.

For at least the above reason, Applicants respectfully submit that independent claim 1, and any claims depending therefrom, including claims 3-9, are allowable over Bruchmann and Beck, whether taken alone or in combination. Applicants respectfully request that the 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) rejection of claims 1, 3, and 9 be withdrawn.

IV. Conclusion

For at least the reasons set forth above, Applicants respectfully submit that this application is in condition for immediate allowance. Reconsideration and prompt allowance are respectfully requested.

No fee is believed due with this Response. Please charge any fee deficiency to Deposit Account No. 50-0540.

Respectfully submitted,

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